

My 4x great-grandfather Major Ira Day was born in 1777 in South Royalton, Vermont. He was the grandson of Benjamin Day Sr., a Captain in the 3rd Connecticut Company in 1750 who served in Col. Trumbull's Regiment in the defense of Fort William Henry and Fort Edward during the French and Indian War. Also the 5x great grandson of Robert Day, who traveled to Massachusetts on board the Elizabeth in 1634 and was a first settler of Hartford, Connecticut. Major Day was deeply connected to New England.

Major Day was one of the earlier settlers to the Barre, Vermont area, arriving around 1797. He was the first postmaster in South Barre in the year 1801 and ran the first tavern in South Barre in 1802. His business and personality allowed him to become a prominent figure in the town and state.

*"Day was one of Barre's earliest and most successful entrepreneurs. His inn sheltered General Lafayette and his entourage during Lafayette's tour of New England in 1826; Day is said to have had his interior of his tavern covered with heavy paper, imported from Paris for the occasion, and to have furnished a coach and six white horses to carry the General over his turnpike through Williamstown Gulf. With Mr. Cottrell of Montpelier, Day owned the first stage and mail route from Boston to Burlington; he also owned a number of local mills and stores."* **From "Vermont Inns & Taverns: pre-revolution to 1925" by John C. Wriston, Jr.**

Around 1800, Elijah Paine built a turnpike in central Vermont that was an important thoroughfare from Montreal to Boston. In 1803, the Williamstown Turnpike was chartered by Ira Day as a more direct route to Barre and Montpelier from the south.

*"Ira Day, then the principal merchant in town, obtained a charter for a turnpike through the celebrated gulf of Williamstown. This was found to be a feasible and easily built road – was owned and built principally by Mr. Day – and found to be a source of profit, taking away a large part of the travel from the Chelsea route."* **From "Vermont Historical Gazetteer: Vol. 4 Part 1+2" by Hemenway, talking about the turnpike in relation to Paine Turnpike.**

Frederic J. Wood describes the turnpike in more detail in "The Turnpikes of New England and Evolution of the Same Through England, Virginia, and Maryland.":

*"November 14, 1803, the act incorporating the Williamstown Center Turnpike Company was passed, providing for a road from Experience Fisk's in Brookfield, northerly up the side of the branch of White River, through the notch of the mountains, to the road leading from Williamstown to Chelsea.*

*This turnpike seems to have been known as "Ira Day's Turnpike," and followed the "Gulf Route," according to Child's Gazetteer of Washington County. It is said that Cottrill and Day's stages followed this route."*

Major Day *"bought large droves of beef cattle, which he drove to Boston market, and which afforded him an extensive and lucrative business. He also, with Mr. Cottrill, of Montpelier, owned the first stage and mail route between Boston and Burlington, VT."*

As this section of VT Route 14 hasn't been dedicated in any one persons honor, I would like to propose it be a memorial highway in Major Ira Day's honor, named **"Major Ira Day Memorial Highway"**. He was an influential person both in the town of Barre and the state of Vermont and should be recognized as such for his contributions. It seems an appropriate way to do this is to dedicate a section of the road that he built in 1803 to his memory.

My request is that the memorial highway location be from just south of the intersection of VT Rt. 14 and Chelsea Road in Williamstown (part of Paine Turnpike) south to just north of the intersection of VT 14 and VT 65. It will pass through the towns of Williamstown and Brookfield. According to Christopher Bump with the Transportation Agency out of White River Junction, this entire stretch of road is considered Vermont State Highway (no Class 1 highway).

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Joshua Blouin  
452 Brookfield Rd. Berlin, VT 05602  
802-477-3792

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Blouin', with a stylized, flowing script.

# **SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS**

"At an early day there was a turnpike road chartered and built, commencing at the checkered store in Barre and ending at Chelsea. The gate to this pike was in the Town of Washington. This pike was the main thoroughfare south-east, leading from town towards Massachusetts, and an outlet for traffic to and from Boston.

At a later date, Ira Day, then the principal merchant in town, obtained a charter for a turnpike through the celebrated gulf of Williamstown. This was found to be a feasible and easily built road - was owned and built principally by Mr. Day -- and found to be a source of profit, taking away a large part of the travel from the Chelsea route. "

"Stage Coaches and old-time teams, before the advent of railroads, were a prominent feature in the business of Barre, and were owned principally by Ira Day and Mahlon Cottrill, of Montpelier. When the stage horn was heard, there was always a rush for the news, and the few moments the stage stopped, spectators were abundant. "

"Wool-carding and cloth dressing was formerly quite an extensive business. The first carding works were built by John Baker, and were situated on the site occupied by the Fork Co. It was also early introduced by Ira Day near South Barre.

Once on a time Mr. Day and his foreman were in his mill in time of a freshet. The mill was in much danger of going down stream. It soon started, Mr. Day and his man in the meantime rushing for the door, too late to reach dry land, sprang upon some timbers floating within reach. The timbers were sometimes uppermost, and then the men, but after a cool and dangerous ride, both were happy to regain solid ground. "If not better men than before."

## THE WILLIAMSTOWN CENTER TURNPIKE

November 14, 1803, the act incorporating the Williamstown Center Turnpike Company was passed, providing for a road from

Experience Fisk's in Brookfield, northerly up the side of the branch of White River, through the notch of the mountains, to the road leading from Williamstown to Chelsea.

Twenty-five years after the completion of the road it was to become free and the property of the state, but the more liberal legislature of 1804 granted another fifteen years of corporate life.

Nothing was done for two years, and the date set in the original act for the first meeting, at which organization was to be effected, passed without that formality. But hope still lived and permission to hold the meeting on another day was secured in 1805.

This turnpike seems to have been known as "Ira Day's turnpike," and followed the "Gulf Route," according to Child's *Gazetteer* of Washington County. There are fanciful tales of the Boston and Montreal stages passing this way carrying the British Royal mail, guarded by a soldier of King George, but the course of the turnpike did not lend itself to direct stage travel in that direction, and the presence of a foreign soldier seems open to much doubt.

It is said that Cottrill and Day's stages followed this route.

1901: (b) as above, --.

(10c) Graniteville.

1898: Granite House, E. J. Woodbury;

c. 1903: Graniteville House, J. Chymowseth (VHS photo, c. 1893; presumably same as above).

(10d) South Barre.

c. 1802: first tavern, Major Ira Day; across the road from the Smith House (location #43, ref 1); "an imposing high building, no longer standing"; Badger and Porter's Stage Register, 1828;

\* \* \*

Day was one of Barre's earliest and most successful entrepreneurs. His inn sheltered General Lafayette and his entourage during Lafayette's tour of New England in 1826; Day is said to have had the interior of his tavern covered with a heavy paper, imported from Paris for the occasion, and to have furnished a coach and six white horses to carry the General over the turnpike through Williamstown Gulf. With Mr Cottrell of Montpelier, Day owned the first stage and mail route from Boston to Burlington; he also owned a number of local mills and stores.

\* \* \*

(?): an early tavern, James Paddock (Hemenway); almanacs, 1825, '29.

(10e) Websterville. No listings found.

Note: the assistance of Verbena Pastor, Curator, Aldrich Public Library, is gratefully acknowledged.

\* \* \*

### References

(1) Carroll Fenwick, ed., Barre in Retrospect, 1776-1976 (Barre: Friends of the Aldrich Public Library, 1975).

\* \* \*

(11) Barton (Orleans).

(11a) Barton (including Crystal Lake).

c. 1800: first tavern, Stephen K. Dexter;

Note: almanac lists a Pillsbury tavern, 1802, '05, location unknown; tavern licenses to James Pillsbury, 1817, '22; Stephen Thomas, 1827-30; Ellis Cobb, 1817; - Mansfield, 1827; Augustus Kimball, 1828, Thankful Smith, 1829; George W. Kimball, 1830; B. Smith, 1831.

•county. These, in connection with others, formed a stage line and mail route extending from Boston by way of Burlington to Montreal. Later Mr. Ira Day, of Barre, made an improvement of the route by building a **turnpike** by way of the celebrated ' ' Gulf route.\*' This line was traversed by Cottrill and Day's famous stage lines, with their elegant coaches drawn by six and eight superb horses. At one time they carried the British mail to Montreal, which then came by way of Boston. A British soldier accompanied each mail, armed with a musket. These lines flourished until the advent of the railroads.